

REMARKS

I. Status of Claims

After the above amendments, claims 1-28 are pending. Claims 1-3, 8, 12, 15, 22 and 26 are independent. Claims 1-3, 6, 8, 12, 15, 22, 24, and 26 have been amended, and claims 5 and 28 have been canceled. This amendment addresses each point of rejection raised by the Examiner. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

II. Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner has objected to claims 2, 3 and 5-22 as being in condition for allowance but for their dependence on rejected claims and has indicated that these claims would be allowable if written in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicant appreciates the indication that claims 2, 3 and 5-22 contain allowable subject matter. Accordingly, to advance the prosecution of this application, Applicant has amended independent claim 1 to incorporate the allowable subject matter of dependent claim 5. Claims 2, 3, 6, 8, 12, 15, 22 and 24 have all been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 1. Finally, Applicant has amended independent claim 26 to incorporate the subject matter of dependent claims 5 and 28. Accordingly, claims 5 and 28 have been canceled.

III. Rejection of claims 1, 23-26 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Shibata et al. (U.S. Pub No.: 2001/0004269, hereinafter "Shibata")

The Examiner has rejected claims 1, 23-26 and 28 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Shibata. As discussed above, claims 1 and 26 have been amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of claim 5. Accordingly, claims 1-4 and 6-27 are believed to be in condition for immediate allowance.

IV. Rejection of claims 4 and 27 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Shibata

The Examiner has rejected claims 4 and 27 as being unpatentable over Shibata. However, as discussed above, claims 1 and 26 have been amended to incorporate the allowable

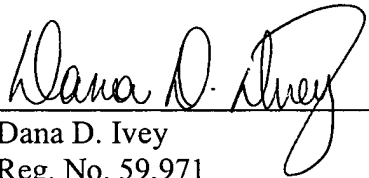
subject matter of claim 5. Accordingly, claims 4 and 27 which depend from claims 1 and 26, respectively are believed to be in condition for immediate allowance.

V. Conclusion

In view of the above, it is believed that the above-identified application is in condition for allowance, and notice to that effect is respectfully requested. Should the Examiner have any questions, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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